



The Aruban Jewish community celebrates 58 years of Israeli Independence

The Ambassador of Israel to Venezuela visits Aruba

A gala event was held in the Cabaret Royale of the Aruba Resort, Casino and Spa on Sunday evening, May 28 to mark the 58th year's of the Independent Jewish State of Israel. Mr. Shlomo Cohen, the Ambassador of Israel to Venezuela and his wife Edna joined the local Jewish community for an evening of entertainment and celebration hosted by the Honorable Consul of Israel, Mrs. Martha Lichtenstein.

Israeli Independence Day (Yom Haatzmaut) is normally celebrated May 14, though the actual date given by the United Nations Charter was May 15. The day before was the last day Israel was under British Mandate, and at 4 pm they lowered their flag and the Israelis immediately raised the flag of the new nation, declaring that moment as their day of independence. Ambassador Cohen also takes Barbados, Suriname, Trinidad-Tobago, Aruba, and Curacao under his charge, and visits each nation to spend time with each Jewish community in celebration.

A number of local dignitaries, Members of Parliament including its President, Mrs. Mervin Wyatt-Ras, the joined the festivities, which included a recital of Jewish folksongs by soprano Catherine Provence, accompanied by Johnny Scharbaay on the piano.

After a welcome by Consul Martha Lichtenstein, the Ambassador addressed the gathering in regards to the warm relations Israel enjoys with Aruba, and Israel's "desire to strengthen and widen these relations."

He stated, "Aruba is a small country in size, but great in its spirit of development and progress. This country has great potential for development and we believe Israel can cooperate in helping to develop high technology, agriculture, and infrastructure. As a result of our recommendations our businessmen are ready to visit the island, further increasing the economic and commercial ties between our two countries... I am very glad that Israel and Aruba share common values such as Democracy, Freedom of Liberties, and Social Justice, and these values are very sound and solid for rapid development and progress of both countries."

The Ambassador continued to speak of the painful process and concessions that Israel has endured to achieve peace with the Palestinians, a peace they enjoy with their neighbors Egypt and Jordan. He also spoke of the difficulties and concerns that Israeli leaders must confront, when the Palestinians choose to elect a government of the Hamas, a recognized terrorist organization by Europe and the United States, and in doing so violate the Oslo Agreements. He expressed the hope in the hearts of all Israelis for peace with their all their neighbors, including the Palestinians.

Ambassador Cohen concluded his remarks by stating that of the many places he visits, he truly delights in his trips to Aruba, as he finds it the "safest place in all the world that he has ever been."

The evening ended with a performance by the visiting dance group Regesh from Argentina. This is their second visit to Aruba, having been here for Israeli Independence Day last year. This group of young people lead by Danny Chaves performs traditional Jewish dances such as the Hora and Yemenite dances. Their exuberance is quite contagious, and they donated their time on Monday morning for a recital for Aruban schoolchildren at the Cas di Cultura in Oranjestad.

After his visit in Aruba, Ambassador Cohen traveled on to Curacao to observe the holiday with the congregation there, which is the largest in the Caribbean, and will continue to other nations under his charge.